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February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004*Congress of the United States**House of Representatives**Washington, DC 20515-2201***COMMITTEE:**  
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**ASSISTANT WHIP**

Ken Winter, Editor and Publisher

Petoskey News-Review

Editorial/Opinion Page

P.O. Box 528

Petoskey, MI 49770

To the Editor *Ken*

This is in response to various letters printed in your newspaper regarding Northern Michigan Hospital (NMH) and my role in the health care concerns at the hospital.

There is no doubt that NMH provides essential services to the citizens of Petoskey and the surrounding communities. And there is no doubt that I want NMH to continue to serve Northern Michigan. I have worked well with NMH over my 12 years in office, which includes my personal advocacy to secure millions of dollars in Medicare funding for NMH as a sole community provider hospital.

However, I cannot ignore the alarming number of complaints regarding patient care at NMH that my office has received over the past several months.

Yes, I want the striking nurses and the hospital to come together, resolve their dispute and move forward. But, even more, I have an obligation to do what I can to assure that every patient who walks into NMH is provided quality health care from federal tax dollars. It wasn't until after temporary nurses had been hired that my office began receiving a steady flow of complaints about patient care and hospital conditions.

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and even an internal NMH document have all found problems with the hospital's infection control. I need to stress that the Blue Ribbon Panel and the CMS report were conducted by independent health care professionals, not politicians, not NMH officials.

Those CMS findings were significant enough to trigger a full hospital-wide survey, which will be done in coming weeks.

In response, NMH administrators have chosen to go on attack instead of publicly admit they have an infection control problem and assure the community that they are going to fix it.

**PLEASE REPLY TO:**

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Some have suggested that my recent efforts regarding NMH are political. Well, think about it, the politically expedient thing to do would have been to sweep these complaints under the rug. But, that's not me and it is not the way I do my job! My job is to represent the people of the First District to the best of my ability. That includes addressing their concerns when they tell me there are problems with patient care in the communities where they live.

It is my hope that CMS comes back with a clean bill of health for NMH after the hospital-wide review. If it doesn't, and additional problems with patient care are found, then I expect NMH will work with CMS to address and correct those problems.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bart", with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

Bart Stupak  
Member of Congress